

An Aboriginal Housing and Homelessness Framework for Victoria

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In Victoria we are getting to work to develop a framework designed to reduce homelessness and improve housing outcomes for Aboriginal Victorians.

Over a decade ago Commonwealth and State Governments signed up to close the gap in Aboriginal disadvantage. Progress has been slow and while there are improvements in some areas and locations they have not been experienced across the board.

We know that stable, safe and secure housing is the foundation for successful investments in education, training, employment, health, justice and family violence. Despite this there remains no concerted, coherent approach to improving housing for Aboriginal people either in Victoria or at the national level.

The Victorian Aboriginal community is strong in its culture and identity but colonisation and dispossession have had long lasting and far reaching effects. In this context, a lack of policy effort and investment in housing has resulted in very poor outcomes.

In Victoria Aboriginal people are:

- nine times as likely to use homelessness services
- in the inner Melbourne area, 14 times as likely to sleep rough.

Aboriginal rough sleepers are more likely to:

- have exited an institution, especially prison
- be women — 41 per cent compared to 34 per cent in the general community

- be homeless due to family violence — 20 per cent compared to 14 per cent
- be under 14 years of age
- nine times as likely to live in social housing — 26 per cent compared to three per cent in the general community
- about half as likely to own a home.

There is a pressing need for a policy framework which brings together actions to improve housing outcomes. Homelessness, social housing, private rental and home ownership all need to be addressed if housing outcomes are to improve. In the absence of an integrated approach Aboriginal Victorians will continue to be subject to piecemeal initiatives, major gaps in program offerings, and lost opportunities to build long-term sustainable housing outcomes. The ongoing escalation of crisis and investment will not be broken.

While undoubtedly investment for those in crisis is needed, we also require investments that lift people out of crisis so that they can establish a secure foothold in secure and stable social or private housing.

Home ownership opportunities also need to be created. Lower rates of home ownership among Aboriginal people mean that they are missing out on the opportunities to create the intergenerational wealth that comes with owning your own home. Meanwhile the pressure on government to make capital investments in social housing continually ramps up.

Aboriginal Housing Victoria (AHV) has successfully advocated to the Victorian Government for the development of an Aboriginal housing and homelessness framework. In the spirit of self-determination, the Victorian Government has agreed that AHV lead this work.

The framework will take a rights based approach and will structure its work around:

- people's housing needs across their life course
- the programs and supports needed to achieve improved housing outcomes
- the capacity and capability of service and housing providers to deliver on objectives.

Professor Kerry Arabena will chair a steering committee that will oversight this work and consultations are a key part of the process.

Please visit the Aboriginal Housing Victoria website for further details or contact AHV at info@ahvic.org.au.

